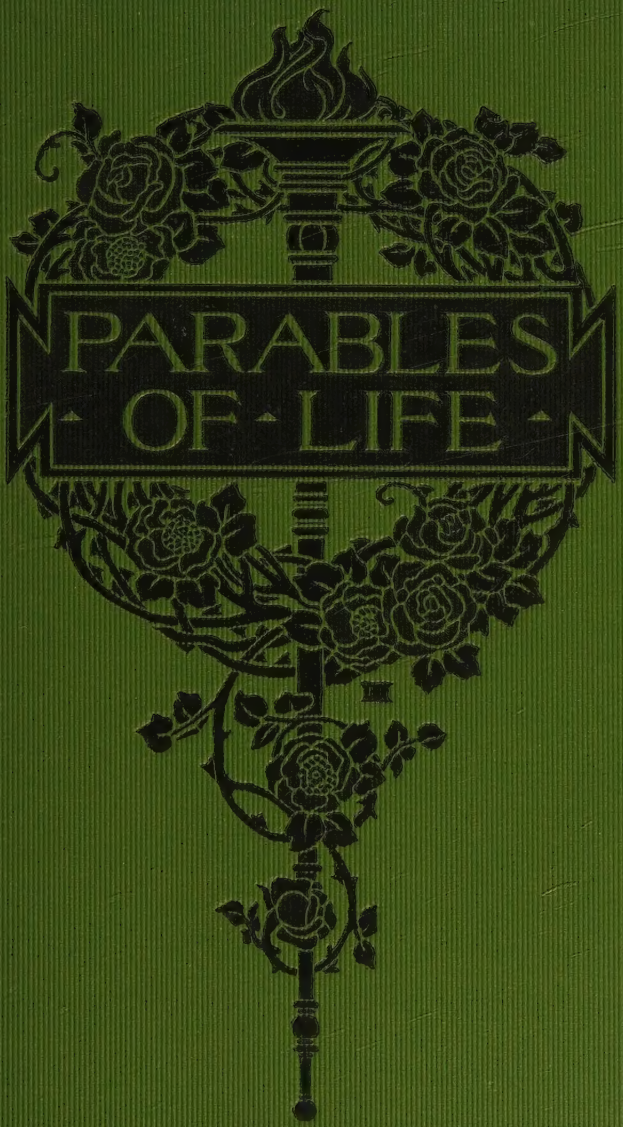

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Parables of Life

The Inflexible Guide

Parables of Life

Hamilton Wright Mabie

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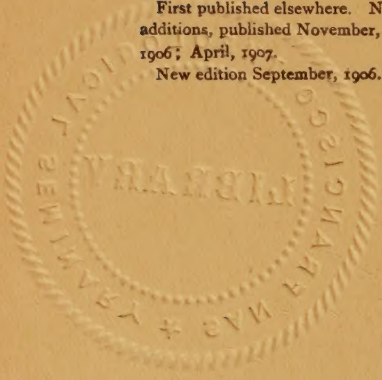
First published elsewhere. New illustrated edition, with additions, published November, 1904; March, 1905; April, 1906; April, 1907.
New edition September, 1906.



Norwood Press:
Berwick & Smith Co., Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

To
Lyman Abbott

THIS collection of short papers illustrative of phases of vital experience, published in 1902, is reissued in this edition with illustrations, and with the addition of four new chapters.

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THE INFLEXIBLE GUIDE

THE INFLEXIBLE GUIDE

THEY stood together in a fragrant garden, Love holding the child by the hand and looking down into its face with a tenderness so deep that it held in its heart the compassion, the sacrifice, the passionate yearning of universal motherhood. Long ago Love had come into the world, and through immemorial years she had walked the stony and terrible ways of life with innumerable children, but the light of heaven had not vanished from her face and the purity of

God lay inviolate in the depths of her beautiful eyes. There was so much gaiety in her mood that sunny morning, such joy radiated from her face, that the child thought his companion the most winning playfellow in the world. In those deep eyes, luminous with devotion, no denial could find a home; within those tender and protecting arms no sorrow or bitterness could come! So Love always seems to those who watch her face and do not know her heart. Two things Love learned in heaven: infinite tenderness and perfect loyalty to truth. The child saw the play of the tenderness rising like a great

tide from unfathomable springs; far beyond, in the years that were to come, he was to learn the deeper compassion of truth.

The journey lengthened and still the boy looked up to the face of Love, and Love smiled like an unclouded sun. But there came a time when he would walk alone and find his own way, and the boy loosed his hand from the hand of Love and chose another path. Unseen, Love still walked beside him and stood between him and many a peril, and in the darkness made a light about him which came the man knew not whence. But the face of Love was often infinitely

sad, and sometimes there shone through its beautiful tenderness a flash of white light which smote the very heart of the man, so that he cried out in pain and turned to Love to be comforted; and, behold! the hand of Love grasped his as firmly as before, but there was infinite sternness, touched with passionate sorrow, in her eyes. And while the man looked to be led gently in fragrant places, Love guided him along perilous precipices and over bitter roads and up great heights, relentlessly urging him forward, herself silent, resolute, inflexible. And the man rebelled in his heart and strove to free him-

self, and cried out that another had usurped the place of Love and stolen her raiment. And Love made no answer, but strode on, inflexible as the will of God and terrible as his purity. Her face was turned away and the man did not see the anguish there, the drops of blood, the print of thorns; did not know that his suffering was but a shadow of the pain in the heart of Love, and the weariness of the way on his soul but a dim reflection of its bitterness in hers. By as much as her heart was deeper and her spirit purer than his was her cross heavier and her anguish more poignant. He suffered because the way was

hard; she suffered because the end of it was shame and misery and death.

As he strove to break away, she held his hand the more firmly; as he strove to find the easier path, she implacably set his feet in the harder road. He thought her harsh and stern and unseeing; and her eyes were wide with the terror of that to which he was blind, and in her agony she wept great tears of anguish.

And when the man found she would not leave him, he ceased to resist and let her take her way; and after a little the road began to grow easier, the ascent less precipi-

tous, the trial of strength less painful. And presently they came to a height, and the man looked back and saw whither the path he had meant to take led, and he shuddered and fell at the feet of the inflexible and terrible figure at his side. And again, as in childhood, he looked up into the face of his guide; and, behold! Love smiled down on him with eyes full of infinite tenderness.

THE WAITING FIGURE

The Warlock Figure

THE WAITING FIGURE

A HOST of stars watching in the vast silence of the night; the earth, a great ball, still and white and dim with sleep, sweeping through illimitable space; fading in the distance the long, faint glow of time, visible for a moment like a beam of light on a measureless sea; suddenly an apparition, born of the night and the stars and the endless movement of the years as they steal out of eternity and recede again into its depths, which every man sees and no one knows. The

figure is vague, mysterious, veiled from head to foot in soft radiancy; a form undefined and elusive, but with hidden nobility of line, molded like a goddess, and like a goddess shielded from the intimate gaze of men. About this sublime figure floats a mist, in which light and darkness are magically blended, half revealing and half concealing, as if a soul were in the process of birth —a soul penetrated with strange, dim, obscure radiations of the remote past, and waiting for the plastic touch of the future; old as the stars, but wearing the garb of immortal youth; bearing the impress of immemorial years, and yet sensi-

tive to the stir of the forces that play through the life of to-day, and to the shaping touch of to-morrow. A mysterious figure, seen by all and known by none, with a face that seems on the verge of clear revelation into familiar features, with intimations of lifelong acquaintance, and yet waiting for some final act of creation, some touch that shall define and fix and turn the plastic stuff of life into perfect distinctness and immortality. Beside every man the figure seems to stand silent, expectant, mysterious; waiting the impress of his hand; full of all nobility of line and feature; a shape for the touch of genius to mold

into a beauty akin with the stars, and yet at the mercy of the hand that strikes blindly, passionately, idly, ignobly; the stuff of immortality waiting for myriad-handed time to mar or glorify; coming from the Infinite to set the eternal beauty again in the ways of men, or to bear again the old marks of those who waste and spoil and destroy the fair visions of the soul: the veiled figure of the New Year, standing mysterious and silent beside every man, under the vast and solemn arch of the midnight sky.

THE LAST JUDGMENT

THE LAST JUDGMENT

SLOWLY and painlessly consciousness returned. He looked about him and remembered. It seemed but a moment, and yet the life he had lived on earth was as far from him as if he had died a century ago. In the stillness and the measureless quiet which enfolded him after those last agonizing hours he knew that he had already entered into rest. So deep was the peace which fell softly as if from the vast heights above him that he felt no curiosity and was

without fear. He was in a new life and he must find his place in it, but he was content to wait; and while he waited his thought went swiftly back to the days when, a little child, he looked up at the sky and wondered if the stars were the lights in the streets of heaven. One by one the years rose out of the depths of his memory and he recalled, step by step, all the way he had come: childhood, youth, manhood, and age. He read with deepening interest the story of his life —all his thoughts, his words, the things he had done and left undone. And as he read he knew what was good and what was ill; everything

was clear, not only in the unbroken record of what he had been, but in a sudden perception of what he was. At last he knew himself. And while he pondered one stood beside him, grave and calm and sweet with the purity that is perfect strength. Into the face which turned toward him, touched with the light of immortal joy, he looked up and asked, "When shall I be judged?"

And the answer came: "You have judged yourself. You may go where you will."

BEHIND THE MASK

Behind the Mask

BEHIND THE MASK

A FIERCE wind beating against the trees and lashing them with merciless severity; vast drifts of snow filling every hollow and drifting aimlessly from point to point; the landscape white and bleak from horizon to horizon, locked by the cold into desolate stillness, without sound or sight of life from sky to sky across the world; the heavens cold, steel-blue, remote, inaccessible, penetrated by an arctic chill; the air bitter, remorseless, with a hint of death in the icy

breath of the gale; everywhere silence save for the rush of the wind; everywhere bonds and fetters and desolation: hard, glittering, inexorable Death supreme in earth and air.

So it looked to the solitary man who braced himself to meet the force of the gale, and, in the partial shelter of a great oak, gazed across the shining fields to the hills whose lines, in the crystalline air, seemed to cut into the blue. So it would have been, in reality, to a man less wise in the wisdom of Nature. This man smiled as he looked, and, if Nature had been less intent on her work far away,

she too would have smiled; for we always smile when some one recognizes us behind our masks. This man knew the mask so well that, perfect as was its counterfeit of death, he was not for a moment in doubt. He knew that behind the mask life was pulsing, coursing, throbbing, beating, gathering volume for a tide that should presently break like a fountain out of the depths of the earth and strew the world with flowers from sky to sky. Behind that mask, secure from all prying eyes, from profane curiosity, from the cold searching of the fact-gatherer, the ancient mysteries were being enacted the primeval miracle

was being wrought again; in darkness and silence all things were moving to birth; behind the face of Death, Life was passionately brooding over the radiant loveliness asleep in her heart.

AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY

AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY

SHE had come a long way, and the fatigue of the journey was on her face and the stains of it on her garments. She walked slowly and painfully, and in her uncertain step there was the record of leagues of travel. She had forgotten many hardships, for memory often sleeps in order that the spirit whose record it keeps may regain lost strength and refill the depleted lamp of life; but she remembered many bitter griefs, and the hand of sorrow had

left a visible impress on her countenance. And the way had long been lonely as well as sorrowful; for they who set out with her had vanished from her side, and she had gone on in a solitude that seemed to deepen about her. Far behind, as she traveled on, was the glow of the morning light, once gloriously glad over the whole earth, now faint and distant as the light of a sun that has long set. And after the morning passed there had come midday with its heat, its far-reaching activities, its strenuous energy, its deepening experience; and after noontide, evening; and so long had she traveled in the darkness, the

little group about her silently stealing away one by one from her side, that it seemed to her as if it had always been night and she had always been alone. Of late she had lost the feeling of motion, although she was conscious that the landscape about her was changing.

She had set out with a high spirit and with a deep sense of joy in action and movement and life; but years and sorrows had saddened her, and she had come to think of herself not only as weary and alone, but old. There was bitterness in the thought because it seemed a denial of her nature. In youth the fountain of life in her soul had

seemed inexhaustible; and in later years, when the rare times of rest from grief and travel came, it had leaped up and sent a gush of joy to her heart. But now, for a long time, there had been no stir of the waters, and age had touched all that she possessed; and so, traveling slowly and painfully with set purpose but with fading hope, she came one dark night to the gate which closes the road. She knocked feebly and the gate swung wide on noiseless hinges. No one stood beside it, for it marked neither end nor beginning of journey, and the road ran straight through it unbroken and unchanged, save that a soft light

rested on it and in the air there was infinite content. No landscape was visible for the mist that lay over it, and no sounds were heard; but when one passed through, he knew without knowing that nature bloomed there with a fulfilled loveliness, and he heard without hearing the songs of birds which are never hushed by wintry skies. The woman rested within the gate, and as she rested she was conscious of no change in herself, but the raiment which she had worn thin and bare fell away and vanished, and she saw that the fading and fraying and wearing away had despoiled only her garments and left her untouched;

and as she rested, the lines vanished from her face and the pain from her limbs, and silently the fountain rose once more. The stains of travel were gone, the signs of age had vanished; once more young, but with a wisdom beyond youth, she started with buoyant step and with a rising hope in her heart; for through the soft mist beautiful forms seemed to be moving, and faint and far she heard voices that seemed to come out of her childhood, fresh with the freshness of the morning, and her spirit grew faint for joy at the sound of them.

THAT WHICH ABIDES

THAT WHICH ABIDES

THE throng was moving on without order and apparently without purpose; though here and there in the crowd there were faces set toward some invisible goal, and eyes which glowed with exaltation and shone like stars in a heavenly order. The road was broad, rough, and full of pitfalls; low clouds hung over it, sometimes lifting and showing a clear sky, sometimes settling about it so closely that its boundaries vanished in obscurity. The throng swept along as if driven

forward by some inward impulse; a few pressing on with steady step; many hurrying or loitering as the mood seized them; and here and there one vanished with despairing face into the fog and was seen no more. Some ran freely, with buoyant and active step; many wavered, broke from the crowd, rested awhile, and then patiently set out again. And ever and anon, in the hurry or the loitering, one stumbled and fell and lay prone, bewildered and exhausted; or rose again, stunned and hurt and soiled, and slipped back into the crowd and was swallowed up in the disorderly ranks.

One there was who seemed born

to run well and with speed, and at times he shot far ahead as if he saw his goal; then, when the light was on his face, he stumbled and fell headlong and lay apparently without consciousness. But after a time he lifted himself and looked about him with despair on his face. Sometimes a hand was stretched out toward him; oftener the throng swept on and left him prone in the mire. He staggered to his feet and began to walk slowly, as if in great pain; and he was filled with shame, for his garments were defiled from head to foot and he was one mass of uncleanness. And some who were near drew away, that their

own raiment might not be defiled; and he crept on, solitary and sorrowful. Now this man, whose steps were so unsteady that he seemed to fall into the pitfalls against his will and often unaware, hated his own uncleanness and counted himself unworthy the companionship of the white-robed men and women about him. And ever as he fell he loathed the more the mire which clung to him and thought himself the more unfitted to touch hands with the clean. But in his soul there was something, he knew not what, which sent him forward in spite of hurt and pain and mire. When he lay prone, a great sickness of heart

smote him and a great longing for cleanness, and so, with shame and much defiled and with loathing of himself, he pressed on with little help, with many cold glances, with a deep sense of repulsion borne to him from many faces.

At last, footsore and weary and faint in heart, he came to a place where the mist lay on the road and many halted, fearful of what might lie beyond; but he, caring only to be clean and fleeing from his own defilement, ran into the mist. And, behold, the mist lifted and a fair country lay smiling about him, and hands were held out to him in welcome. But when he looked into

the pure faces of those who stood guardians of the country, he drew back, crying, in great agony of spirit, "I cannot enter, for I am unclean."

And they smiled and pointed to his garments; and he looked, and, behold, his garments were like snow. And he stood trembling, knowing not what had befallen him and doubting if he were himself. And while he doubted, a voice came to him saying: "In thy heart thou didst hate uncleanness and love purity, and that only which we love abides."

THE TOUCH OF NATURE

The Touch of Nature

THE TOUCH OF NATURE

IT was the stillest of June mornings; nothing stirred save that deep, mysterious life which had risen again out of the heart of the earth, and, like some divine emotion, brought the soul of nature to shy disclosure. The flight of birds did not break the silence, and their songs seemed hardly to ripple the quiet of the solitude which folded all things in its heart. There was no priestess at the shrine; there were no sacred vessels of gold; no censers swung; no chorused praise

floated from adoring hearts like a mist heavenward; but the woods were silent with adoration, and the very earth seemed to worship in a deep quietude which was tremulous with life. A sense of infinite peace brooded over the place, and in the soft shadows of the trees a fragrant coolness enfolded and calmed and soothed.

Into this refuge came a woman whose step was agitated and whose face was convulsed with anguish. She came alone, but something seemed to be pursuing her; she walked swiftly, fearfully, as if carried forward by dread of that which followed her. In the heart of the

wood she paused a moment, struck, apparently, by a sudden recognition of the vast change between the world from which she had fled and that into which she had come; and it seemed as if an impassable gulf opened between her agitated spirit and the deep tranquillity of the shaded solitude. She glanced over her shoulder as if she half expected some torturing vision, as if some agonizing grief were swiftly approaching; but there was no stir in the woodland paths and the silence was unbroken. At a distance a clear, sweet, mysterious note floated upward, untouched by human passion or care or toil; a note which

flowed through the upper air with the purity, the stainlessness, the lonely freedom, of the mountain brook. The trembling woman listened; it came again and again, borne to her as if from a distance, and bringing with it subtle suggestions of remoteness, of the ancient quiet of immemorial woods, of the vast, impersonal repose of nature, whose years are forgotten in the abyss of time. In that clear, penetrating note, held in the air by the silence which it penetrated, nothing spoke to the woman's anguish, to her tortured fancy, to the throbbing pain in her heart; there was no tone of consolation for the grief

which had driven her into that solitude; no balm for the suffering of the moment; but something was borne in upon her spirit; a soothing and quieting touch was gently laid upon her soul. The measureless life of the world spoke to the immortal life in her.

She waited, still suffering, but calmed and expectant. And as she waited in the silence and solitude, with the distant song of the lonely thrush in her ears, the tumult in her heart subsided, the murky air of her mind cleared, the strain of her spirit relaxed. Out of the depths of the woods there came a solemn peace.

She looked up, and through the network of trees the sky was radiant as of old; she looked back to the life from which she had fled, and she saw that her pain was only a part of it, and that the universe had not become a great instrument of torture; that the place where she had suffered was only a point in a world which spread out to far horizons on every side; and the anguish which had seemed to envelop earth and sky no less than her own heart appeared but an incident in an endless life. No voice yet spoke to her pain, but there came a calmness, a sanity, an opening of mind and heart for the

comfort which was moving toward her, borne onward by slow-footed time. She had found that quietness which is the open door for the incoming of truth and strength and peace.

OUT OF THE AGONY

Out of Sight

OUT OF THE AGONY

IT was midday, and the sun beat on the course with merciless intensity; a cloud of dust hung over the track and enfolded the runners so that they saw neither the sky nor the crowd that waited and watched, excited, eager, ready to break into thunders of applause. They saw one another only indistinctly — vague figures moving in a suffocating fog. The agony of the contest had entered their souls; their faces were strained, sweat poured from them; they ran with a silent, steady

persistence that was full of pain and yet indifferent to it. The few who still ran had ceased to count suffering; that was part of the price of the reward, and they paid it without questioning. It was, after all, only a kind of acute fatigue, and the brave spirit makes sport of fatigue.

The weak, the irresolute, the fickle-minded, had long since fallen out of the race. They had started with assurance on their faces; for the course lay so clearly before them that it seemed but a little way to the goals shining in the fresh morning air. There was an eager throng cheering the runners as they sped away from the starting-post, and

friendly faces and shouts lined the path or followed them long. It was pure pleasure to run in the bracing air, with flying competitors, with goals to guide the feet, and vociferous praise following like a noisy wave. But the distance lengthened, the morning passed, the heat grew bitter, the dust of racing feet rose in a suffocating cloud, sweat ran from every pore, the struggle became agonizing. Those who were untrained, who had borne no yoke of discipline, who needed the stimulus of applause or of visible rewards, grew faint and weary and ceased to run. In the cloud of dust which moved along the course there

was left only the little group of those whose sinews were steel, whose wills were iron, who cared neither for applause nor for rewards if only the race might be well run. They had ceased to hear the cheers so long that they had forgotten that there were any spectators; they were so intent upon putting forth their full strength that they had ceased to think of the goals. They ran as if running were life and nothing else were worth while. They had given themselves to the race, they were paying the price; that was the whole of their simple, heroic story.

And while they ran, long for-

getful of all save the speed of the moment, the dust began to settle, the sky began to clear, the heat began to pass, faces began to appear on either side, and sounds broke the silence. And, lo, when they had ceased to care for reward in the strain and stress of the trial, suddenly the goals shone clear and close at hand in the soft afternoon air, and long cheers thundered about them, and flowers rained from friendly hands, and crowns of wild olive were outstretched.

DREAM AND REALITY

Dream and Reality

DREAM AND REALITY

THE great square was thronged with busy people; little groups gathered and dispersed again without apparent reason or order; a murmur of confused sounds arose, some musical and many discordant; the noise of many kinds of work rose and fell with a rhythmic movement, in a unison which was without melody but not without dignity and power; the dust raised on the highways by many approaching feet hung over the place, and the smoke of great chimneys

obscured the heavens; tumult, dissonance, toil, and weariness pervaded the place. Through the crowd an eager boy was trying to make his way. He had come from quiet places sweet with the breath of flowers; from the radiancy of soft skies, whence every night benignant stars had lighted his musings; from great dreams which moved across his mind as the clouds drifted across the heavens, vague and formless but full of fertility; from visions which were more beautiful than the world he saw about him but not different from it—sublime fulfilments of visible and audible promises of per-

fection, divine completions of realities. Out of the quiet valley in which the boy had played and shouted and taken the world into his heart, youth had led him up long and steep ascents to a great height, over which the sky seemed to bend, and from which far-stretching landscapes and a great city were visible; and there, in the breadth and clearness of his vision, the boy had come to himself and knew that the dreams which had encompassed his childhood were the foreshadowings of the truth he was to find and to impart, the beauty he was to see and to set anew in some fresh and appealing form; for a

man cannot reveal the truth until he has found it, nor make beauty flash again on many eyes until he has looked into its soul, not as it floats, serene, ineffable, and flawless, in some distant heaven, but as it shines through the substance and shape of realities.

And so, led by his genius, the boy had come down from the heights into the market-place, for truth's sake and beauty's sake, and wandered about like a lost spirit, oppressed and bewildered by the tumult and disorder. The discords smote him like blows; the dust and smoke blinded him; the uproar and contention and ugliness

pierced him like arrows. He shrank from the touch of the gross and palpable imperfection about him; his spirit cried out for the peace and serenity, the vision and beauty, of the valley where he had shouted in the joy of childhood, and the heights whence he had seen the things that were to be.

Presently, as he wandered, with infinite homesickness in his heart, he began to discern here and there touches of beauty, hints of loveliness, foregleams of perfection. And as his soul fastened upon these fragmentary glimpses of the world which lay in his memory, remote and inaccessible, a new note became

audible in the tumult, a new meaning seemed to flash for a second over the vast, tumultuous disorder — a note prelusive and prophetic, a meaning born of some vast purpose slowly and mysteriously being wrought out with men and tools; with iron, clay, and wood; in trial and strife and agony; in love and sorrow and life and death.

As he caught this deeper meaning, borne in upon his spirit by the sighs and sobs and groans of men and women in that great multitude, his vision grew clearer and deeper, and he saw everywhere the signs and sorrows and joy of the work which every man does not only

with his hands but with his soul; and slowly, through the dust and turmoil and smoke, he discerned the meaning of it all: the passing of truth into life, the birth of beauty, through anguish and sorrow, into visible form.

Then he understood that the perfection he had once looked upon, and which lay inviolate in his soul, had been wrought by Another; that it lay outside and apart from him and he had no place or share in its shaping. And so there came to him the discovery which comes to all lovers and makers of the good and the beautiful, to the creators whom men call artists, that the

beauty in his memory was but a vision of delight until he made it real with his own hands in spirit or flesh or stone or wood. And the noisy place became still to him; and the crudity seemed about to take on noble shapes; and on the faces of his sorrowing, toiling fellow-workers he saw the image of God slowly dawning like a glorious morning out of mist and darkness as they touched the stuff of mortality with the power and beauty of the immortal.

OUT OF PAIN

OUT OF PAIN

IT was a radiant world on which the boy opened his eyes; a world so beautiful that it was impossible to look at it without seeming to see through it a richer and more wonderful loveliness about to rise out of its depths. It was a beauty which made the spirit faint with expectation and the heart ache with a sense of coming joy. In such a world all things were within reach of the eager soul, blithe with the bliss of the morning and eager to share the impulse of life which,

like a fathomless tide, crept to the summits of the hills and left verdure and fragrance sweeping on behind it. The boy's eye was clear and keen; he saw at a glance the wonder of things in endless variety and exquisite adaptation. The boy's thought was orderly, coherent, vital; he discerned the marvelous relation of parts to the whole and the glorious unity in which all things were held and harmonized. The boy's imagination kindled and glowed; the vision of an invisible loveliness, a higher and diviner beauty, rose before him as sight and thought brought the visible world closer to his spirit. The boy's will stirred

with the slowly rising energy of a force at once concentrated and sustained. He stood there like a noble figure in a garden, touched with the glow of the morning, bathed in light, encompassed with the infinite suggestiveness of a universe in which God's thoughts, sown in the furrows of the sea, the broad stretches of land, the measureless spaces of sky, bloomed in indescribable splendor, and on every wind set loose other seeds which should make fragrant the far limits of the universe. This marvelous world was silent, and he had a voice; this sublime mystery waited for interpretation, and he divined

its meaning; this measureless force of life needed other wills and minds and hands, and he waited, eager and impatient, for his place and his task. All things were within his reach; all things summoned him.

He put forth his hand, and suddenly a throb of pain shot through it, and it fell by his side; he stepped forward, and a swift anguish smote him so that he paused, stunned and uncomprehending. These things were so strange in that fair scene, so much at variance with all he saw and divined, that he paused until they should pass; for they could be but fleeting touches of something alien and intrusive. But

the pain did not pass; it became more intense. The anguish did not abate; it grew more bitter. Then, when he began to understand that these terrible things were part of the world, that world grew black and horrible before his eyes; the light pierced and hurt him; the beauty stung and maddened him. He was like one who slowly dies of thirst while the music of running water is in his ears, who slowly starves while fields of waving grain encircle him. In the bitterness of that merciless denial of the claims of his soul for joy and beauty and work, he was ready to curse and die; for his life had

turned to pain, and the loveliness he saw seemed a dream of madness.

But he could not die, for he was immortal; nor could he shut out the loveliness of the world, for the image and memory of it lay like a vision in his mind. His will, which would have laid hold of noble tools for noble work, grew strong and stern and steadfast; for the boy, become a smitten and solitary man, was shut off not only from tasks but from fellowship with those who worked. In his loneliness and desolation only the inner voices spoke to him; his companionship was with his own spirit. Presently thoughts began to rise out of the depths of

his pain as they had once come to him out of the heart of the beautiful world—thoughts so deep and at times of such awful meaning that they made him forget his pain. And this power to rise out of pain grew with the strength it brought, and became a refuge and comfort to him. And as he suffered, silent and inactive, there came to him slowly the knowledge of that world of sorrow into which he had come; so near the world of beauty and yet seemingly so remote from it and so alien; and in that world he was slowly transformed until he saw with other eyes and heard with other ears.

When he found that something was being wrought within him, he became patient and waited; for new hopes were beginning to stir in his heart and new dreams began to take wing in his imagination. Silent and solitary as he was, these changes were unrecorded and left their traces only in the passing away of despair, the slow incoming of a tenderness, a sympathy, a wistful longing to succor and help, which had had no place in the unconsciousness of his radiant youth. And as the years went by, the tenderness in his soul, born of old-time sorrow, became a passionate impulse, and a great craving awoke within him; and one

day he opened his eyes and looked once more, and, behold! the world of his memory had vanished like a dream, and before him lay another world vaster and more awful and more divinely fair, not with the beauty which glows and fades but with that which discloses itself through the revelation of life, with the pressure on the spirit of the shaping hands of care and sorrow and bitter knowledge. And as he looked he was no longer alone, for the world was full of those who stumbled and fell and were heavily burdened and smitten with great infirmities. And he, knowing the bitterness through which they were

passing and seeing the end which was invisible to them, rose from his place and raised one and spoke to another; and for those whom he could not reach he lifted up his voice and sang the great song of love that knows not fear, and the song of consolation which follows it like a beautiful echo. Many looked at him, and, seeing on his face the deep lines of such grief as they bore, were comforted; and many listened, and, hearing in his voice those deep tones which come out of great anguish, heeded and were helped. He, meantime, thought not of these things, but, seeing the unspeakable beauty shin-

ing more and more clearly through cloud and storm and ugliness, pushed on eager and joyful, a mighty passion of hope and helpfulness moving with him. And when he paused, he suddenly became aware that he too still suffered; but he had forgotten himself.

THE AWAKENING

THE AWAKENING

THE dream lasted long, and many times the man seemed about to awaken. The night wore on through many changes; shrouded at times in densest darkness, and at other times gloriously lighted by stars. Men moved through it in throngs, sometimes like real persons, full of life and thought and will, and then like shadows, flitting pathetically from point to point, vague and dim and meaningless. Sometimes great tumults rose and fell on the night, and then a deep silence filled

the hours and all things seemed asleep.

The turmoil and the stillness touched the sleeper while he dreamed, but did not awaken him. He was conscious of the night, the storms, the silence, and the stars, and these things mingled with his dream, but did not mar its beauty.

He dreamed that he was moving through a world marvelously beautiful and without limit of boundary, variety, or loveliness; that other beings like himself bore him company and kept the way with all brotherliness, sweetness of fellowship, and joy in one another and in the common journey; that as they

moved, borne onward by pure impulse and kindling hope, each man's sight grew clearer, every man's heart warmer, all men's natures nobler; and as each man's vision cleared, the world through which he journeyed became more deeply and marvelously beautiful, as if the reality without were shaping itself to meet and match the growing nobility of the spirit that looked and saw and understood.

In the souls of all those that traveled there were secret hopes of perfection, sacred passions for purity, deep and silent puttings forth of the heart for joys which were beyond the reach of speech; and as they

moved forward every man came to his own, and found infinite easing of soul and fathomless peace in the harmony between his spirit and the world about him. For life had come to complete fulfilment in clarity of knowledge, in the perfect play of love, in beauty beyond the dreams of those divinely guided dreamers, the poets, in that health which is wisdom and joy and the deep living in which action instantly matches thought and a man's word and deed are clean as his love and true as his conscience.

And beyond this fulfilment of life there rose a radiant prophecy of diviner visions and works and

joys; a kindling of the sky as if a more radiant day waited below the horizon; and beyond that, in endless procession, the days of God, rich in power and knowledge and love and service forever and forever. And every man's spirit was aglow with that which filled his soul to the uttermost of the happiness of fulfilled life, and every man's heart beat as he saw, like a far flight of the unfallen and the purified, the dawning of such bliss as the heart of man hath not conceived nor the mind of man pictured. And the air was full of fugitive strains of old songs sung in old homes which every man kept in his heart, and of

far echoes of a music so deep and vast and unfathomably sweet that every man seemed to hear his own soul speaking, and knew that he was hearing the first notes of the ultimate harmony of life.

And there fell a silence on the company so deep that every man heard the beat of his companion's heart and knew his thought; and behold, in all the company there was not one heart that was not pure nor one thought that was not sweet; for the chord of self had

"past in music out of sight."

And while the man dreamed, he passed out of childhood into man-

hood and through manhood into age, and his sleep became broken, and strange confusions of shadow and reality came upon him, for the night was far spent.

Suddenly he awoke, and, behold, even as he dreamed, so was it now that his sleep had gone. "As yet lingers the twelfth hour and the darkness; but there will come another era when it shall be light, and man will awaken from his lofty dreams, and find — his dreams all there and nothing is gone save his sleep."

KNOWLEDGE OR LIFE

Kinnartidego ur Life

KNOWLEDGE OR LIFE

HIS childhood was spent in a secluded valley, but his earliest memories were of the hills which rose, precipitous, vast, stainlessly white, against the blue of the sky. He was intimate almost before he could talk with the brook which ran, swift and foaming, near his father's house, fed by the snows which kept the purity of the upper air inviolate on the lonely summits; he knew in the earliest days, by the touch of the bare foot, every inch of the

meadows; as he lay awake in his little upper room and watched the play of the moonlight on the bare wall, he could count every tree within the circle of the hills; he knew the birds which came flying down every spring from the heights, bringing the first soft breath of summer with them; all the faces, young and old, of the little scattered community of hard-working folk, who strove with the soil and wrung a bare sustenance from it, he knew, and every voice had a familiar sound in his ears. His childhood was sheltered by love and nourished by kindness, and the quiet of the valley and all

the wonder of its changing life sank deep into his heart. But while his feet sought every by-path and knew the level of every field, and his hands were busy with that manifold activity in which the young life touches the new world and answers its mysterious voices with a thousand outgoing energies, his eyes were always seeking the hills, and his thoughts were always searching the far heights as if there were something there which belonged to him.

Little by little he lengthened his journeys of discovery, and when youth came he had already learned how to climb and had

stretched himself with infinite delight on many a jutting rock up the mountain side, from which the valley lay spread out in its quiet and restful loveliness. Born in the shelter and safety of that protected place, and bred amid its peaceful scenes, the boy was, by nature and by the deepening passion of his soul, a climber. He longed for the joy and peril of the ascent, for the widening of the horizon, which seemed as he rose, stage by stage, to make him the creator of a vaster world; and he dreamed day and night of the splendor of the summits where one could stretch out his hand and

touch the sky, and open his eyes in the night and, behold! an innumerable company of stars kept him company. He was a born climber, — lithe in figure, swift in movement, quick and sure of step, with a vision at once accurate and far-seeing; framed for perilous adventure and heroic achievement; and with a heart that knew no fear because it was clean as the snow.

Slowly the years went by and the boy became a youth and his journeys grew longer and more daring, and he learned all the secrets of the mountains; for no man scales great cliffs and mounts

to great heights until he has trained every muscle and mastered every kind of knowledge of the mountains and of himself.

Then the youth became a man, and, in the kindling glow of the awakening senses and imagination, the glory of life burst on him, and his heart knew no thought save the highest peaks and the mystery of light that lay there — the sublime prize of the heroic climber.

And the day came at last when, being his own master and all the world before him, he set his feet on the rocky path and looked back at the old home and the fields where men toiled and the homes

in which they loved and lived and suffered and died, and grew proud with the consciousness of a wider fortune and a nobler fate.

It was early morning, and he ran rather than climbed, so eager was he and so strong. Then the sun rose higher, and he slackened pace and walked more slowly and carefully, husbanding his strength for the higher passes. Day after day he climbed, for the mountains were vast as a continent in mass and bulk, and night after night the splendor of the stars drew nearer. There were weary hours and aching muscles, but these things were but the mist which

the next rising sun dissolved in air; there were great perils of yawning gulf and trembling avalanche and uncertain path; but his heart laughed in the joy of measuring strength with the forces that oppose in order that they may evoke the power which masters. The radiant sky, the widening vision, the waxing strength, the glorious freedom from lesser and meaner ways and works and cares, thrilled the man's soul and gave him at times a consciousness of immortality which clothed him with invincible strength.

So he climbed, and grew in strength and power and vision un-

til the upper heights were within his view, and his heart was full of the wonder of those higher reaches of knowledge and what he should find there.

There came a day at last, after all the years of dreaming and toiling, when he stood at the point where the clouds gathered about the gateway of the ultimate heights, and he turned for a last look at the distant valley, so far below the place where he stood, in the lonely grandeur of perfect strength and unfettered life, that it seemed part of a lower world. And as he looked out of his childhood a voice seemed to speak to

him, and out of the fields a murmur seemed to rise, and out of the scattered homes a cry so faint that it was almost inaudible penetrated the clear, cold, stainless world. Long accustomed to silence, these sounds struck his senses painfully and smote his heart with a sense of something ominous. And as he hung there, waiting and still, the sounds seemed to flow together and become articulate, and he knew that he was hearing the cry of his kind,—the appeal of their sorrows, toils, uncertainties, doubts, miseries, and weaknesses; the deep, compelling voice of the soul of man in the travail of its earthly life.

And the cry grew clearer and stronger, as he listened, until the vast gulf of space seemed to be filled with it; and on the man's heart there fell an infinite sadness and on his face there came a look of agony. Above him were freedom, knowledge, mastery, the joy of the unfettered mind; beneath him were care, sorrow, work, limitation, misunderstanding, disappointment: on the heights the loneliness of unfettered solitary growth; in the valley the wisdom of the fellowship of service. He waited, struggled, hesitated: then he turned back.

THE DEAD SOUL

The Dead Soul

THE DEAD SOUL

THE old man had come a long way, and was burdened not only with years and sorrows, but with the knowledge of good and evil. As he looked back and retraced the road he had travelled over, the weariness of the journey gathered upon his spirit until it seemed to him as if the spring of life had been choked at its source, and nothing remained save the dry and dusty channel through which the stream had once run shining in the sun. He was so

worn with labor and grief and unfulfilled hope that he thought of little save rest; the soul in him had fallen into a sleep so deep that he had lost the sense of life which is keen and quick when a man feels his immortality. He cared for nothing but forgetfulness, so far had the iron of the futility of thought and knowledge and effort entered into his soul.

The irony of life never seemed so poignant and piercing as when he caught the faint echoes of the old songs of his youth, the ghostly cheers that had rung around his early achievements and had become mocking echoes of labors which

brought no gain and applause, which lay in the ear for a moment and then dissolved in that appalling silence in which at last all human cries and songs are hushed. It was a dead past which lay behind him; a path through a desert, without bloom or shelter or the shadow of trees in which birds rest and sing; the desolate and solitary way of a lonely man through a world which always bloomed as he advanced and withered as he stretched out his hand to grasp its offerings.

Tired as he was to the verge of extinction, he had not wholly lost the remembrance of the energy

that once sent him with vigorous step along the ascending way, of the high things that summoned him from their inaccessible fastnesses, of the steady and unbending purpose that kept him to his task. He had set himself to go alone to the end of the journey; to break all bonds which held him in place among his fellows, that he might follow

> "Knowledge like a sinking star
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

Others might be content with nearer and lesser things; he gave himself to the remoter and greater ends. Others might carry the

common burdens and share the common fortunes; his way led him apart from the crowd to some remote and solitary place where the mystery of the universe would suddenly disclose itself in cloud and fire and splendor unspeakable, — a fate too large and terrible for any save those who had taken the path of solitude and lonely watching of sun and star in the awful silence of space.

There had been a time when the hopes that men cherish had knocked at his heart, and more than once he had struggled long before he barred the door. But the path lay before him, and he

who walked in it must be free of hindrances. In those earliest years love had held him for a moment with eyes that looked into his strangely sorrowful, and had walked a little way with him, not pleading, but with a touch on his hand so full of pity that his pride flung it aside. There was no room for such companionship on that narrow path; no smoothness for such tender feet on that rough highway. What had he to do with love whose heart was set on knowledge? In those first years voices had often called to him as he passed, imploring his aid, and sometimes

through his growing self-absorption the anguish in these voices had reached his heart and stung the old human sympathies into life; but he looked up at the far heights and hardened his heart and passed on, resolute and unshaken. The morning was already moving toward noon; why should he waste the hours that were to carry him to the goal? What claim had common souls, content with the small gains and losses of life, with love and the prattle of children and the cheer of friendship, on one who sought the highest and remotest secret of life? They were content with

the hour; he would accept nothing less than the full content of eternity.

Long ago love had left him; long ago men had ceased to call upon him for help as he passed swift and unswerving on his way. And the way had grown more silent and solitary, until nothing was audible save the touch of his own foot, and he had no companionship save his own thought. He had broken every tie, discarded every hindrance; and freedom had brought him measureless weariness and a passionate longing for death!

He had learned much by the

way, and that wisdom of old age was his which had been distilled, drop by drop, out of disillusion and despair — that wisdom which is often called knowledge of life, but which is really knowledge of death. What had been born of the man's long travel was the knowledge of himself. The world about him was so vast that as he scanned it there seemed neither measure nor limit; but it was hard, barren, dead to the uttermost verge. The order which pervaded it was the rigid regularity of death; no seed was germinating in the soil, no egg was brooded over in any nest, no throat

was swelling with its song, no sap was rising in any tree; vastness there was and sublimity, but it was without the speech of beauty; for the soul of the man was dead, and saw only its own desolation. Long ago the power of vision had faded within him, and he saw only the shell of things: the secret was farther from him than when he set out on his journey! He had gained knowledge, but without love there is neither wisdom nor life.

VISION AND TOIL

VISION AND TOIL

HE pushed the pile of papers aside and made a clear space on the desk at which he sat. There were signs of great fatigue on his face — a sensitive, resolute face, full of fine impulse, of clear thought, of spiritual energy. A look of concentration gave high organization to his whole bearing, and his expression betrayed depths of feeling under a steady reticence and a great working power. That he was the minister of great ideas was clear to any one who studied him intel-

ligently; that he was the servant of tyrannical duties was also apparent. There was not only the shadow of extreme fatigue on his face; there was also the look of a man harassed and embarrassed to the very limit of endurance, who longs passionately for escape. This man was exalted by ideas and beaten down by the numberless details which were involved in giving those ideas practical effectiveness. So much drudgery came in the train of the ideas to which he was giving his life that for days together the ideas were hidden out of sight, lost in a maze of petty, insignificant, wearisome details;

and the minister of great conceptions felt himself degenerating into the drudge of petty, irritating, stinging exactions which absorbed his time, exhausted his strength, and robbed him of his vision.

He had never felt more weary in spirit and body than at this moment, never more removed from the ends on the attainment of which he had set his heart, never more forsaken by the inspiration of the noble things he sought. They seemed to have vanished and left him the slave of petty duties and the drudge of meaningless service in the house of a stupid and irrational tyranny.

In his weariness he fell asleep, and dreamed a dream born of his fatigue and his idealism. He seemed to be climbing a mountain which rose in fair and noble lines in the clear summer light. The approach was across a meadow flecked with shadows of passing clouds, with sheep browsing on the tender grass, the long, gentle slope to the edge of the woods starred with flowers and swept by a flood of light. He ran shouting with pure joy in the day, the trial of strength, and the great view which in imagination he already saw from the summit. Far over him an eagle wheeled in a vast

cycle and then rose with sublime ease against the sun, and the man caught the splendor of the strength and sweep of vision which the bird typified.

The open space was soon crossed and the conditions of ascent changed; there was still the path, however, and the man walked easily and without effort in the shade of the trees. Presently the trees were set more closely, the path ended, the way through the forest became more difficult. The climber walked with slower step, and the gladness on his face gave place to quiet confidence. As he advanced the difficulties multi-

plied; the mountain side became rougher, the underbrush more dense, the air heavier; the climber's breath came more quickly, he began to feel a great thirst, and drops of sweat gathered on his face.

Resolute and unshaken in purpose, he pressed on, and, as he climbed, the way became more precipitous, the obstacles more vexatious, the heat more unbearable, the effort more painful. The exhilaration had vanished, for there was no outlook: the man was environed with dense underbrush, hemmed on every side by thorny and stinging

growths; he saw only the little space in which he stood; beyond, on every side, there was an impenetrable wall of dense shade which seemed to mock and deride him with silent, mirthless opposition.

His face was set and his courage did not fail, but every nerve was strung to the utmost tension, his heart beat like a great hammer, his feet were sore with the roughness of the stony way, his dress was torn, the sweat poured from his face, and his body ached with fatigue. There was, apparently, no escape from the heat and weariness and dim obscurity.

The climber almost ceased to hope; the clear line of the summit, as he had looked up to it from the fertile fields, faded from his memory; no glimpse of the far landscape came from time to time to give him strength. In the long strain, the unrelieved agony of unbroken effort, he came at last to think of nothing save the next step. The noonday heat was on the world, and on the steep side of the mountain it smote the climber, through the shallow foliage of rough hillside growth, with relentless pertinacity. So dense was the air and so sultry that he seemed at moments

on the point of fainting from sheer suffocation; and yet, hour by hour, exhausted, solitary, with fading vision and dying hope, but with unfaltering purpose, he climbed step by step the steep ascent.

The afternoon shadows lengthened; the air freshened; over the world there lay an indescribable tenderness of beauty; and the mountain rose in benignant and protecting solemnity at the great gate through which the sun was passing on to other dawns and days. And when the glory was so vast that sky and landscape seemed to lose all hardness of

line and blend in one sublime harmony of color, a worn figure emerged at the summit and paused for a moment bewildered by the sudden splendor; then, suddenly, as if lifted by the swift realization of a hope long buried under some black despair, drew itself up with conscious strength, and caught the light and stood erect with a consciousness of mastery.

And the man awoke, and first marvelled at his dream and then understood.

THE EASTER VISION

THE EASTER VISION

SIGHT he had, but not vision. The things about him stood out with the utmost distinctness; every line was sharply defined, every feature and shape distinctly limned. So accustomed was he to entire accuracy of perception, to perfect exactness of knowledge, that he was impatient of any blur in another's sight, any uncertainty in another's report or account of things. Confidence in his own judgment had become second nature with him; he acted as

one who could make no mistakes. And this was the impression others received from him. All men spoke of his clearness of judgment; of the vigor and decision of his nature; of the weight and authority of his character. He was, in a word, the master of his world.

But it was significant that, while men went to him for advice in all practical matters, no man ever sought his counsel in any moral confusion or uncertainty; no man struggling to his feet from the mire in which he had slipped ever turned to him for help; no man compassed

about with sorrow and in the presence of the supreme experiences of life ever so much as thought of him. Exact, trustworthy, keen, truthful, the man of clear sight touched his fellows only in the world of things; when the fortunes of the soul were in the balance, he neither saw nor felt nor understood.

To him all these intangible interests were as if they were not. He managed his acres with perfect judgment, but he could not see the landscape which enveloped them; he saw the little section of world in which he worked, but the universe was invisible to

him. In his sight men were born, grew into childhood and youth, passed on into manhood, did their work, died and vanished from sight, and that was the end. He saw the outlines of their character with marvellous clearness; he knew where they were efficient and where they were weak; he judged with exactness of their value for practical service; but of their inner experience, of their spiritual struggles, of the forces and conflicts which give character its quality and life its meaning, he knew nothing. He was a master of the knowledge of things, but no ray of that wisdom which

gives a man understanding of life ever penetrated the central darkness of his mind. He had sight, but he was without vision.

Now, all the wealth of this man's nature was lavished on one whom he loved not blindly but instinctively — with the passion of the heart which gropes after those things that it needs without knowing that it needs them. In this woman's eyes the man who loved her saw, without seeing, the reflection of that heaven which was beyond his sight; and in her nature he felt, without understanding, the play and stir of those spiritual impulses and forces which

slowly fashion in a mortal frame an immortal spirit; and in her life he was aware of a wealth of tenderness, of devotion, of self-surrender, which he could neither measure nor compute. And she became as his own soul; for she was vision to him, and in her the mystery and blessedness of life was present though never revealed.

This woman died, and the man's heart broke within him, and the world of sight lay in ruins about him; for he saw nothing save the beautiful garment which the spirit had laid aside; and that, too, was put out of his sight. He was in a prison of hopeless misery; and

many tried to speak to him, but he could not understand them for the thickness of the walls which surrounded him; and many strove to release him, but he could not be freed, for he had locked the great doors from within.

In the darkness the man no longer saw the old familiar things, and became as one blind; groping for the accustomed places of rest and finding them not, for the sweet ways and usages of love and missing them. His outstretched hands touched nothing, and his passionate longings returned upon themselves and turned to deepest pain; and in his solitude and deso-

lation nothing abode with him save memory.

For a time he was as one dead, but one dear memory kept companionship with him; and in the silence and darkness one image was always in his thought. As the days went by, that image seemed to fill his soul, and grew more real, and touched the hidden springs of life within him, and his heart grew tender under the spell of the great love with which he lived alone in a night in which the earth seemed to have vanished.

As his love deepened, a glimmer of hope began to suffuse the

night, like a faint radiance from a light beyond the horizon, and delicate tendrils began to climb out of his heart toward that light; and there came a breath of something surpassingly sweet, like a fragrance from invisible gardens.

And the spirit of the man softened and stirred, and he lifted his face, and the dim outlines of a new world slowly disclosed themselves. As he looked with wonder and awe and the yearning of a child stretching out its hands toward the light, this world became more distinct, and spread around him in a beauty such as he had never so much as dreamed

of before. There were familiar objects in that world, but they were no longer hard and rigid; the outlines were lost in vaster designs and were tender with new and deeper meanings; the familiar acres were folded in a larger landscape, whose far horizons seemed to recede into luminous distances suffused with a light that streamed from the heart of things, and enveloped them in a splendor and beauty which broke out of them like a mighty flood of life.

The man went abroad once more with the heart of a child, and looked up to the heavens that had grown infinitely tender and

benignant, and across the landscape that glowed and bloomed about his feet; for love had unsealed his eyes, and the power of sight had passed on into vision. And as he walked he was not alone, for one walked beside him whose presence was peace and whose companionship brought faith and trust and rest. The perishing world which he had once seen had widened to become the imperishable world which love builded in the far beginning, and which love enriches and enlarges and makes more beautiful with the coming of every soul that enters into it through the gates

of birth and of death, for both are the gates of life.

And as he looked, behold, the places where the dead lay were blossoming fields; for in all the reach and being of the universe there was no death. Through all things streamed the mighty tides of life, and in the range of his vision the barren places broke into bloom, and far as his eager spirit travelled there were the stirrings and strivings of tender and delicate and mysterious things growing in strength and beauty. And there was no more night; for in the darkness, as in the light, infinite love watched and

waited and cherished all things in its immortal hands; and nothing was forgotten or lost. And he saw the universe traversed by a countless host to whom sight had become vision; full of the repose of a great freedom and the deep joy of perfect strength fitted to imperishable ends. And in that multitude he became aware of those who had laid aside all care and sorrow and entered into the fulness of life; and one moved near him — no longer a memory, but a visible presence — who had vanished in the darkness of his great sorrow; who had gone out of his sight to live henceforth

stainless, radiant, and immortal in his vision; no longer hidden behind the veil which she had worn in the days before the revelation, but shining without blur or dimness or shadow upon the beauty of her unclouded spirit. And after all the years of his love he knew that for the first time he saw her as she was.

And the air was soft about him, and the fragrance of the early flowers was borne to him; and like a far music he heard the bells of Easter ringing above the churchyard.

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